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ABSTRACT

When administration and staff jointly focus on centralized goals, they unite to form a powerful base from which a successful substance abuse program can evolve. Planning activities that include all staff members who have feelings of self-efficacy result in a comprehensive, integrated curriculum and program that is effective for local needs. Substance abuse programs that constantly focus on formal evaluation often lose sight of the more relevant informal information obtained through student behavior, school climate, success and participation in extracurricular activities and sports, and academic achievement. Some districts believe that each of their schools must have identical, uniform substance abuse programs; however, disaggregation within a district--while appearing somewhat chaotic--can actually be a more effective approach. Disaggregation fosters autonomy, flexibility, and innovation and allows a school to respond quickly to an issue or problem. (KM)

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SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAMS:

SUCCESS THROUGH OWNERSHIP

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SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAMS: SUCCESS THROUGH OWNERSHIP

With the Drug-Free Schools and Community Act and funding in its third year, most school districts have implemented substance abuse programs. In fact, many district's substance abuse programming began well before that funding was available and was put into effect based on local need and resources.

History has revealed that initially many schools have followed a popular trend and used "canned" or packaged programs. Most "canned" programs maximize exact lessons while minimizing deviations. These programs have dictated to educators all elements of the program, including in some cases, exact dialogue. Needless to say, these programs come with a high price. Eventually most educators have realized the ineffectiveness of these "canned" programs and put them to rest on a shelf. All to often, this process has left the school district without any programming. Eventually school districts or building staffs have rallied together to formulate their own substance abuse programs. In hindsight, they realize this is what should have happened in the first place.

Developing Ownership

School ownership of its substance abuse program does not occur automatically, simply because it is developed within the walls of the building. Rather, it depends on how the substance abuse program is developed.

When adminstration and staff, jointly focus on centralized goals,

they unite to form a more powerful base from which a successful program can evolve. Planning activities that involve all staff members, who have feelings of self efficacy, result in a more comprehensive, integrated curriculum and program that is more effective for local needs than anything that can be purchased.

Teacher self-efficacy is necessary when planning and teaching successful prevention programs. Kanter (1983) described efficacy as a value commitment between the person and the organizaiton. Self-efficacy includes the belief that the self has the "power to do". Teachers need feelings of self-efficacy and believe that they have input in program planning and to develop ownership. Teachers also need an atmosphere where they can teach successfully, and make a difference in youth substance abuse. If teachers experience a feeling of self-efficacy, they tend to be more supportive of the school's mission and feel they belong to a worthwhile effort (Adams and Bailey, 1988). Ingredients of teacher self-efficacy in substance abuse education are:

1. A knowledge-base of substance abuse prevention
2. A positive self-image
3. Administrative support that endorses teacher efficacy and empowerment
4. Altruistic motivation to teach

When teachers possess these ingredients, along with involvement in program planning, they can make a true impact on students. It is in the administrator's and school's best interest to empower teachers

in the planning process, especially teachers who possess a large substance abuse knowledge base.

Need For Accountability

With today's focus on accountability in education, substance abuse education is no exception. Society is demanding results and schools are feeling the pressure of such demands. However, programs that constantly focus on formal evaluations (extensive surveys, test, etc.) often lose sight of the more relevant informal evaluations. Student behavior; school climate; success and participation in extracurricular activities and sports; and academic achievement are a few informal indicators that are relevant.

Administrators should use caution in trying to over-measure the effectiveness of a substance abuse program. The very nature of prevention makes measuring difficult. This is not to suggest total disregard of accountability, but rather a position of moderation. More time spent on activity, may lessen the need for formalizing accountability.

Disaggregated vs. Holistic Programming

Some school districts believe that each school in their district must have identical, uniform substance abuse programs. Again, accountability, as well as control and consistency, are emphasized over what may be more appropriate for a school.

While appearing to be in possible disarray, program disaggregation within a district can actually be a more effective approach than a district's "canned" program. The idea that identical programs should be used universally in school districts would be concluding that all schools are identical. That would be a very unusual district. The disaggregation approach fosters autonomy, flexibility, and innovation. It allows a school to respond quickly to an issue or problem instead of adhering to a rigid "canned" program.

An acceptable degree of accountability can be assured if each districts' schools have the same general guidelines and goals in program planning. However, methods and strategies in developing programs can be as different as each school is different. Following are three areas targeted for comprehensive programming:

1. Prevention Education
2. Intervention Plan
3. Postvention Strategies

Conclusion

A new paradigm is emerging. Schools are disregarding "canned" or packaged substance abuse programs in favor of school-owned programs. Administrators who promote self-efficacy, empowerment and avoid excessive formal evaluation may have more effective substance abuse programs. Staff members, because of their investment, may be more willing to give time and effort toward the program. But more than that, this approach will promote teacher excitement and activity.

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